LAS Data Collector User Guide

About the Data Collector

The LAS data collector is a temporary tool available for schools to use to collect student scores on assessments that use the Maine *Learning Results* system of scoring. The data collector will be superseded by the full version of MEDMS when that application becomes fully operational. Consequently the data collector has no analyzing or reporting capabilities of its own. It is merely a means for schools that do not already have a student information system to capture scores.

We recommend that a single individual maintain the data collector, and that additional copies not be made within a school. This is because if teacher, student, or assessment information is added to one but not the other data collector(s) in a school, there is no way to reconcile the differing versions.

The data collector is intended to be as user-friendly as possible. Nevertheless, users who already have some experience with computers, and especially with Microsoft Excel, will likely find it easier to use than those who have little or no previous experience. We therefore also recommend that the individual who will be using the collector should have at least some computer literacy.
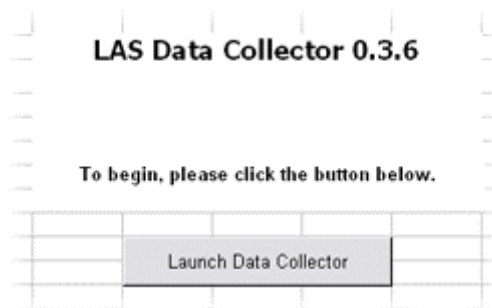
Starting the Data Collector

The collector was built using Excel's macro language, so when you go to open the Excel file you may get a security warning that "this document contains macros". Press the "Enable Macros" button to continue. Since a digital signature was applied by the programmer, you may choose "Always trust macros from this source" to avoid having to press "Enable Macros" every time you start the data collector.
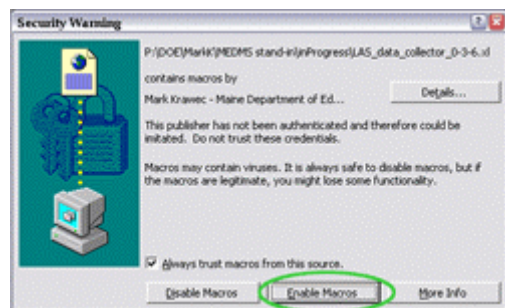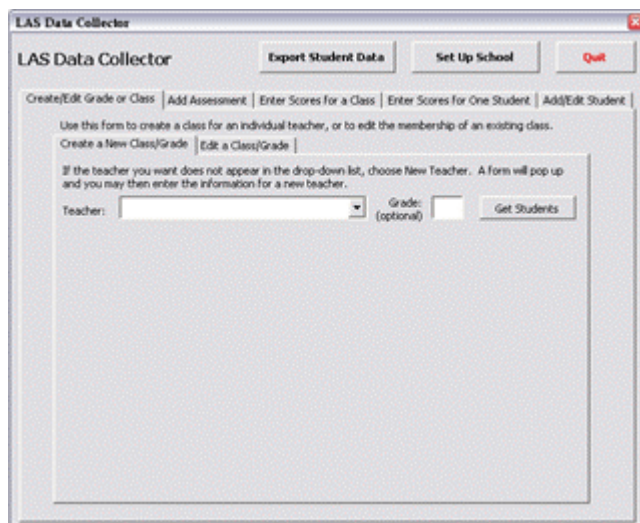

If you initially do not have the option of clicking "Enable Macros", your security level is set to High. In this case to use the collector you must select "Always trust macros from this source" first, and then press "Enable Macros".

Once you see this screen:

press the "Launch Data Collector" button to start. You will then see this screen:

You can now begin using the data collector.

Initial School Setup

The LAS data collector does not have assessments pre-loaded. This is because each school is free to use LAD or MAP assessments or locally selected/developed assessments.

The data collector also, naturally, has no student, teacher, or school information in it at first. To set up the collector for your school, press the "Set Up School" button in the upper right-hand corner of the main data collector screen.

A box labeled "LAS Data Collector - School Setup" will pop open. The box contains three tabs. The first tab is the School Information tab, the second is the Load Students tab, and the third is the Load Teachers tab.
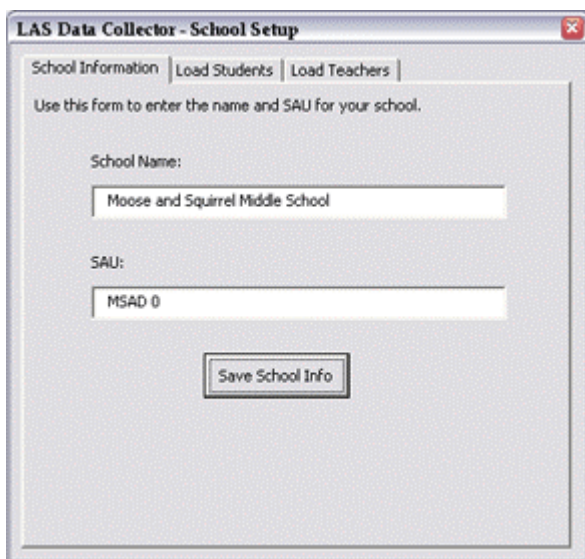
There are actually two ways to record student and teacher information in the collector:

1. If you have or can get a tab-delimited plain-text file[1] containing the information (one file for the students and one for the teachers), you can use the Load Students (see page 3) and Load Teachers (see page 4) tabs in the School Setup box.

2. If you do not have access to prepared student and teacher information files, you will need to record students and teachers one at a time. For students use the New Student panel of the Add/Edit Student tab (see page 13). For teachers use the New Teacher function on the Create/Edit Grade or Class tab (see page 7).

Either way you will have to enter some student and teacher information into the data collector before any scores can be recorded.

School Information Tab

This tab lets you record identifying information for your school.

Enter your school's name and SAU in the appropriate boxes and press the Save School Info button. This information will be included in any file of student scores you may export later.

Load Students Tab

N.B. This tab is only useful if you already have a tab-delimited plain-text file of student information prepared. If you do not, you can enter student information one person at a time using the left-hand panel on the Add/Edit Student tab (see page 13).

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[1] A tab-delimited file is one organized in which the data is arranged in rows, with each item in a row separated from the following item by a tab (i.e. a fixed amount of empty space). A plain-text file is one that has no formatting information. Most student information systems should be able to create this type of file.
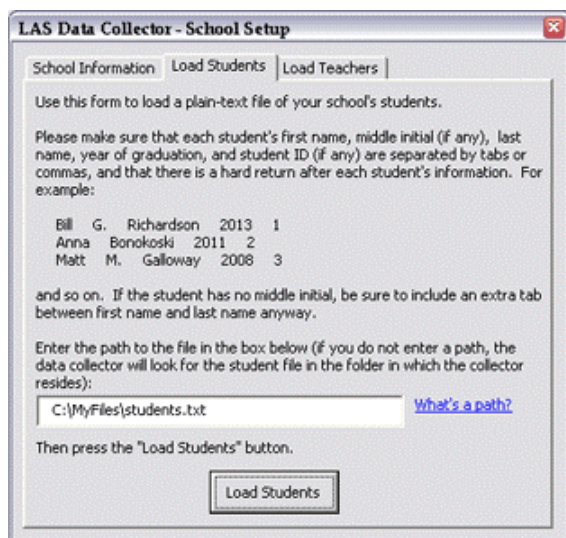
You can use this tab to load a file of student information. The file should have, in this order:

- Student's first name

- Student's middle initial, if any (if the student has no middle name, be sure to include an extra tab or the student's last name, year of graduation and ID will be stored in the wrong fields)

- Student's last name

- Student's year of graduation (YOG)

- Student's ID, if any

The students in the file you load will automatically be sorted alphabetically by last name.

If you have saved this file in the same folder as the data collector, all you need to do is enter its name (e.g. "students.txt") in the textbox. If it is saved in another folder, enter the full path[2] to the file in the text box. You can load the file from anywhere on your computer or from any network drives to which you may be connected.

If for any reason the data collector cannot find the file, an alert message will pop up. Check that the file exists and that it is in the folder you specified.

You can use the Load Students function at any time, but the file that you load will irreversibly overwrite any student information that had been loaded previously. That includes any student information entered using the New Student panel of the Add/Edit Student tab.

Load Teachers Tab

N.B. This tab is only useful if you have a tab-delimited plain-text file of teacher information prepared. If you do not, you can enter teacher information one teacher at a time by using the New Teacher option on the Create a New Class/Grade subtab of the Create/Edit Grade or Class tab (see page 7).

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[2] For example, if you use Windows XP and you saved the student file in your My Documents folder, the path to the file would be C:\Documents and Settings\your.name\My Documents\studentfile.txt. The path must start with a drive letter (typically C: for your hard drive, A: for a floppy disk, and so on).
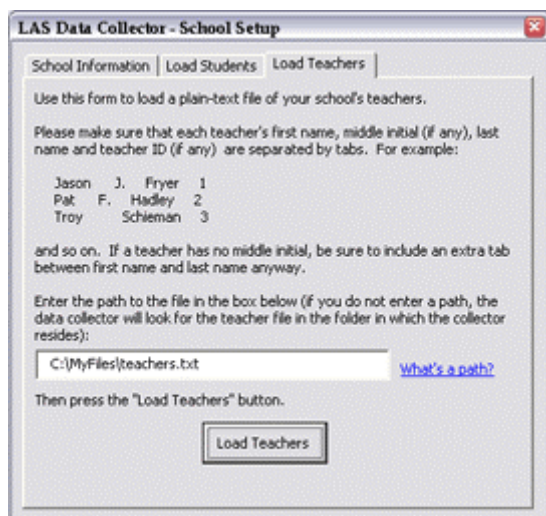
You can use this tab to load a file of teacher information. It works the same as the Load Students tab, except that the file of teachers has one field fewer. For each teacher, the teacher file should provide, in this order:

- Teacher's first name

- Teacher's middle initial, if any (if the teacher has no middle name, be sure to include an extra tab or the teacher's last name will be stored in the wrong field)

- Teacher's last name

- Teacher's ID (if any)

The teachers in the file you load will automatically be sorted alphabetically.

If you have saved this file in the same folder as the data collector, all you need to do is enter its name (e.g. "teachers.txt") in the textbox. If it is saved in another folder, enter the full path[3] to the file in the text box. You can load the file from anywhere on your computer or from any network drives to which you may be connected.

If for any reason the data collector cannot find the file, an alert message will pop up. Check that the file exists and that it is in the folder you specified.

You can use the Load Teachers function at any time, but the file that you load will irreversibly overwrite any teacher information that had been loaded previously. That includes any teachers entered using the New Teacher function on the Create/Edit Grade or Class tab.

Exiting School Setup

Once you have finished entering school information or loading teachers or students, close the School Setup screen by clicking on the red "x" in the upper right hand corner.
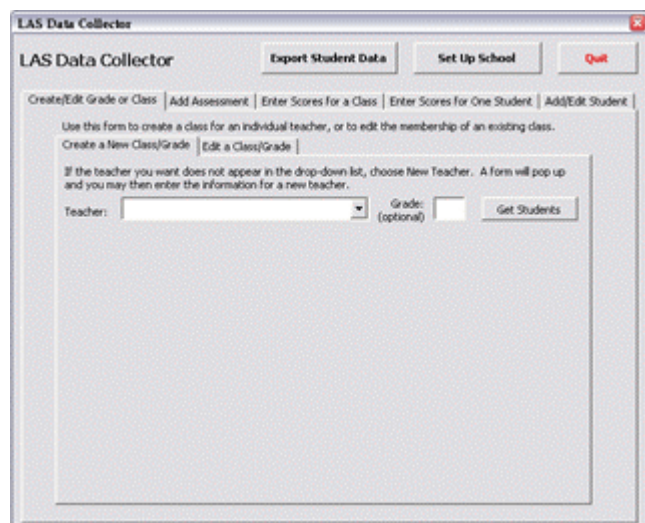
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[3] For example, if you use Windows XP and you saved the teacher file in your My Documents folder, the path to the file would be C:\Documents and Settings\your.name\My Documents\teacherfile.txt. The path must start with a drive letter (typically C: for your hard drive, A: for a floppy disk, and so on).

Parts of the Data Collector

The main functions of the LAS data collector are organized under five tabs.

1. Create/Edit Grade or Class Tab

The Create/Edit Grade or Class tab lets you group students by teacher, teacher and subject, teacher and grade, or all three. You can then use the Enter Scores for a Class tab to record assessment results for an entire class at once.

Creating a Class

To start creating a class, use the Create a New Class/Grade subtab. Choose a teacher from the drop-down menu. Note that unless you have used the Set Up School form to load a file of teachers, there will be none in the menu. There will, however, always be a "New Teacher" option at the end of the menu. If you choose "New Teacher", a box will pop up that will allow you to enter the necessary information for that teacher (see page 7)

After choosing a teacher, you may enter a grade level in the textbox if you wish. Press the Get Students button and a list of students will appear.

Hold down the Ctrl key (on a PC) or Command key (on a Mac) on your keyboard and click on each student you want in this class.

If you entered a grade level, the list will contain only those students who are currently at that grade level, based on their YOG. If you did not enter a grade level, the list will contain all students who have been entered into the collector.

You do not need to select a grade – if you wish, a class may consist of students from more than one grade.

A drop-down menu of content areas and a textbox also appear. Select a content area from the menu and enter a section identifier in the textbox, if necessary. (For example, if a teacher's class has A and B sections.)

When you have selected a teacher, content area, and all the students for this class, and entered any optional information, press the Save This Class button.

New Teacher

To record information on a new teacher, select New Teacher from the teacher menu on the Create a New Class/Grade subtab. An Add a New Teacher box will pop up:

Enter the teacher's first name, middle initial (if any), last name, and teacher ID (if any) in the appropriate boxes, then press the Save button. A confirmation message will pop up, and the teacher will now appear in all the teacher menus on the data collector tabs.

Editing a Class

To edit the membership of a class, choose the Edit a Class/Grade subtab.

Select a teacher from the Teacher menu, and a class from the Class/Grade menu. If the menu is empty, no classes for that teacher have been recorded. If there are classes to select, the members of the one you choose will appear in the left-hand list. All students who are not in that class will appear in the right-hand list.

To add one or more students to the class, click on one or more names in the right-hand list (hold down the Ctrl key (on a PC) or Command key (on a Mac) to select more than one) and press the Add button. Those names will disappear from the right-hand list and appear in the left-hand one.

To remove one or more students from the class, click on one or more names in the left-hand list and press the Remove button. The names will disappear from the left-hand list and appear in the right-hand one.

Press the Save Changes button to save the revised class.

2. Add Assessment Tab

The Add Assessment tab lets the user enter information about an assessment that will be used in that school.

Enter the name of the new assessment in the Name box. Select a Grade Span (PK-4, 5-8, or 9-12) from the drop-down box. Select an assessment Source (MAP, LAD, or Other for assessments selected, adapted, or developed at your school). Select a Content Area, then a Type. The list of available types will change depending on which content area was selected. Finally, enter the indicators that the assessment will measure in the Content Performance Indicators box. **Be sure to separate each indicator with a comma**, since the data collector looks for those commas when it reads the list to display the form used to enter students' scores on that assessment.

One of the choices under Type is "Other". If you choose "Other", a box will pop up:

You can use this box to enter a new type for the content area you selected. The new type will be available each time you use the data collector after that.

When you have entered the information for the assessment, press the Save button. If any information is missing, an error box will pop up to notify you what must be entered. If nothing is missing, an alert box will pop up to confirm that the assessment has been saved. The Name and Content Performance Indicator textboxes will reset to blank.

3. Enter Scores for a Class Tab

The Enter Scores for a Class tab lets you assign scores on an assignment to all members of a class at once. The tab initially shows a teacher drop-down menu, a class menu, and an assessment menu. There are also three textboxes for recording the date on which the assessment was given.

Begin by selecting a teacher. The class menu will automatically be populated with each class that has been recorded for that teacher. If there are none, you will not be able to proceed any farther on this tab. If there are, select an assessment from the assessment menu. (Note that you may select any assessment for any class, regardless of the assessment's defined grade span or the class's designated grade level, if any.)

When you have chosen a class and an assessment, the name of each student in the class will appear in the area below, along with a textbox into which you can enter the score for each of that task's content performance indicators.

Enter the date on which the assessment was given in MM/DD/YYYY format, then enter a value of NS[4], 1, 2, 3, or 4 for each content performance indicator for each student. If the student took the assessment with some sort of accommodation, check the "W/A?" box.

If one or more students in this class did not take this assessment at this time, check the "NT" box.
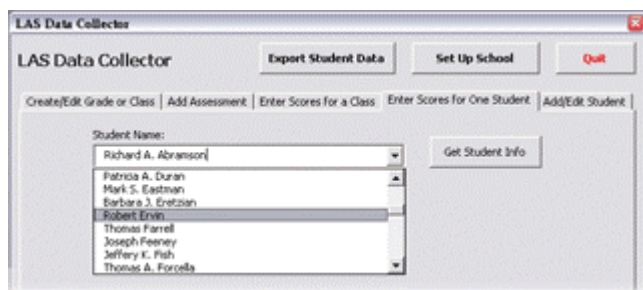
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[4] Or "ns" – it doesn't matter whether you capitalize it as long as you don't mix upper- and lowercase.

Once you have entered all the scores for the students who took the assessment, press the Save Scores button. A message box will pop up to either confirm that the information has been saved, or point out where required information has not been entered or an invalid entry was made (like giving a score of 5, or entering 13 for the month).

4. Enter Scores for One Student Tab

Use this tab to record a score on an assessment for one student. You can enter a score for an assessment the student has never taken, enter a new score for an assessment the student has already taken, or enter a score for an assessment is taking for the second (or third, or however many) time.
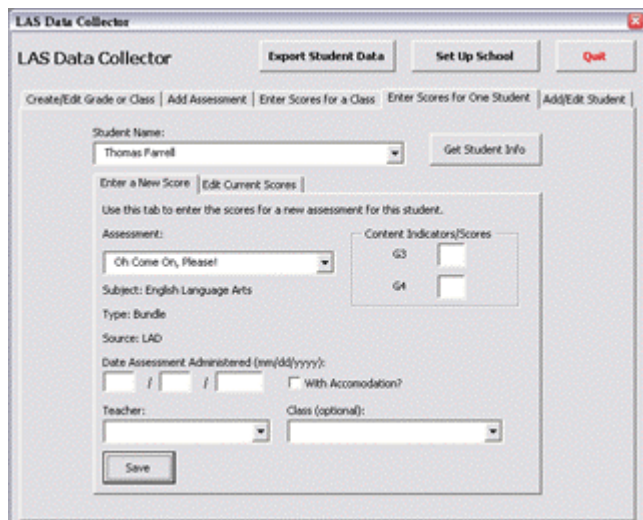
Choose the student from the drop-down menu at the top of the tab:

and press the Get Student Info button. Two new subtabs will appear: Enter a New Score and Edit Current Scores.

Enter a New Score

As the name implies, the Enter a New Score tab adds a new score to the selected student's set of scores. You may select any assessment that has been entered into the data collector, even if the student has taken that assessment previously. (Note that you may give any assessment to any student, regardless of the assessment's designated grade span.)

Enter the date on which the assessment was given and check the checkbox if the student received any sort of accommodation while taking it. Use the drop-down menu to select which teacher administered the assessment. If that teacher has any associated classes saved, the classes will

appear in the class menu and you may select one of them. Press the Save button to save the information you entered.

Edit Current Scores

The Edit Current Scores subtab is intended to let you correct any mistakes that might have been made when recording the results for a student's assessment. It works just like the Enter a New Score subtab, with two differences. First, the Assessment drop-down menu displays only those assessments the selected student has already taken. Second, the scores, date, teacher and class (if any) are already filled in.

Press the Save button to save your changes.

However, if no scores have been recorded for this student, you will see only a message saying as much:

5. Add/Edit Student Tab

Use the Add/Edit Student Tab to enter new students one at a time or update a student's YOG.

The tab is divided into two panels – Add a New Student and Edit an Existing Student's Information.

Add a New Student

To enter a new student into the collector, fill out the ID (if any), first name, middle initial (if any), last name and YOG textboxes in the left panel and press the Save New Student button. All of the textboxes will reset to blank.

Please be sure to enter **four digits** for the **YOG**.

Edit an Existing Student's Information

To change a student's YOG, select the student's name from the menu in the right panel. Enter the new YOG in the textbox and press the Save Changes button. Please be sure to enter **four digits** for the **YOG**.

Exporting Data to a Plain-Text File

The data collector stores all information about assessments, teachers, students, classes and scores in one Excel file, which may become quite large over time – so large, in fact, that you may not want to e-mail the whole file. If you would like to export student score information to a plain-text file, which will be much smaller, begin by pressing the Export Student Data button on the main data collector screen.

This will open a new screen:

On this screen you can select:

- a teacher,
- a teacher and a grade,
- a teacher and a class, or
- a grade.

If you select a teacher, all the scores for assessments given by that teacher will be exported. If you select a teacher and a grade, all assessments given by that teacher to students at the grade level you selected will be exported. If you select a teacher and a class, all assessments given by that teacher to that class will be exported. If you select a grade, all assessments given to students who were at that grade level at the time they took the assessment will be exported. You cannot select a class without selecting a teacher.

Enter a name for the file in the appropriate box. The name can be anything you like, but should end with ".txt". Otherwise, programs that try to import the file may not be able to recognize it as a plain-text file.

The exported file will consist of one row of data for each student score that met the criteria you selected. In each row will be (in order or appearance):

- the student's full name

- the student's ID (if any)
- the assessment name
- the student's grade level at the time it was taken
- the date on which it was taken
- the assessment's content performance indicators
- the student's scores for each indicator
- the teacher who gave the assessment
- the class (if any) as part of which the student took the assessment
- a true/false (1/0) value denoting whether the assessment was taken with accommodations
- the school's name
- the school's SAU

Each value will be separated by a tab.

Exiting the Data Collector

Please be sure to use the "Quit" button to exit the data collector. Clicking on the "Quit" button causes the underlying Excel file to automatically save any information you entered or changes you made.

If you exit by clicking on the "x" in the upper right hand corner, your changes will not be saved. When you quit Excel, you will need to answer "Yes" to the question "Do you want to save the changes you made?". If you do not, none of the information you entered will be saved! (Of course, if you've made a mistake and would prefer that what you did not be saved, you can use the "x" and then answer "No" when you quit Excel.)

Note that when you quit the data collector, you do not exit Excel. If you want to stop using Excel altogether, close it as usual.

Q & A

Q. I can't check the "Always trust macros from this source" checkbox at all. Why not?

A. You're probably using Excel 2003, the very latest version of Excel. Excel 2003 won't trust the type of digital signature applied to the data collector (and we don't have the budget to pay for one it will accept). That doesn't mean that the data collector isn't safe to run, just that you'll need to follow these steps:

1. If you're still looking at the Security Warning box, go ahead and choose disable macros, but then close the data collector Excel file.
2. Click on Tools > Macro > Security.
3. On the Security Level tab, select Medium then press OK.
4. Open the data collector Excel file again.
5. You should now be able to select "Enable macros".

Q. What was that flash when I started the collector?

A. When the data collector starts, it automatically adjusts certain settings on the worksheets. Each sheet becomes active for a moment, which causes the brief flicker on startup.

Q. Why can't I enter anything into the worksheet cells? I can see what's in them but can't do anything with them.

A. Information that will eventually be imported into MEDMS needs to be in a standard format. The sheets in the workbook are "protected" – only the macro forms can enter or manipulate the information in them; users cannot type anything into the sheets or edit the contents. Using forms to collect the information means users don't have to try to remember exactly what has to go in which column of which sheet, in which format. It also helps reduce the risk of tyops – er, typos getting into the data.

Q. Why do the worksheets jump around when I save something in the collector?

A. As you save information, the individual sheets on which the data is saved become "active", and jump into view in front of all the other sheets. The visual effect is admittedly a little disconcerting, but it's nothing to worry about.

Q. Do I have to use the export student data function?

A. E-mailing the whole data collector is possible but probably not advisable. As you enter student, teacher and assessment information, assessment scores, and possibly new types, the collector's file size will increase. If your school has a large number of students, the collector could grow so large that some e-mail systems may refuse to handle it. Here at DOE we can receive files of several megabytes, but your school's e-mail system may refuse to send a file of that size. (These instructions, by way of comparison, are about 500 kilobytes or 0.5 megabytes.)

Q. If I'm not supposed to use the usual "x" button to exit the data collector, why didn't you just get rid of it?

A. That "x" button is a standard part of any Microsoft Office program screen, so all screens in a program are going to have one whether the programmer likes it or not. Our apologies for any confusion.

Q. Why is this version 0.3.6?

A. The data collector is version 0 since it's only a temporary measure. Its design has undergone three major revisions (0.3), and there have been six minor changes (0.3.6) made since the last major revision.

Q. I've got a question this guide doesn't answer. Whom should I contact?

A. For help with the data collector or this user guide, contact Mark Krawec, LAD/MAP technology issues contact person, at mark.krawec@maine.gov or 624-6862.